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The impact of governance on modern languages in Scottish Schools, 1962-2014

James Scott

Educationalists, linguists and politicians have debated the decline of Modern Languages (MLs) in schools, both in the UK and across the Anglophone world. Internationally, research has addressed pedagogical, motivational or societal causes of ML decline but has rarely examined the nature or effectiveness of the politico-educational governance which is intended to improve ML teaching and learning.

This first study of the political and educational governance of Modern Languages in Scotland considers its interactions with ML improvement or decline during the period from the introduction in 1962 of (relatively) broad-spectrum Ordinary Grade qualifications to the introduction of “new” National Qualifications courses in 2014, using this timescale to analyse the nature and effectiveness of ML governance in Scotland across the ten post-war phases of attempted curricular and qualifications improvements. Through this historical approach, five long-term periods of ML growth or decline have been identified and connections between governance actions and ML outcomes analysed. The findings identify successful and unsuccessful politico-educational governance strategies – specifically in the ML context but with wider applicability to educational governance and attempted improvement, both within and beyond Scotland.

Introduction

As in other Anglophone countries, Scotland’s government, educational agencies and media have identified Modern Languages (MLs) as a declining area in schools, although only sporadic action has been taken to address the issues involved. Little Scottish research has addressed this decline apart from papers issued by the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (SCILT) in the 1990s. The key SCILT paper, *Foreign Languages in the Upper Secondary School: A study of the causes of decline*. (McPake, Johnstone, Low & Lyall, 1999) (henceforth, FLUSS), identified certain issues and considered their causes. FLUSS paralleled the last major ML report (HMI, 1998) by the Scottish evaluation body, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education [HMI, later HMIe and has now been subsumed in Education Scotland]. Jointly, these papers created short-term media pressure on Scottish politicians to improve the status of MLs, paralleling events surrounding HMI’s previous major ML evaluation (HMI, 1990). Unfortunately, later HMIe reports on MLs (HMIe, 2005a, 2005b, 2007a) and SCILT papers (Doughty, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c) failed to achieve a comparable impact, reflecting the continued decline in Scottish political/societal prioritisation of MLs.

Doughty’s studies used 5 to 13-year periods to analyse ML uptake and examination results; FLUSS analysed 5 years drawn from a 20-year period, but neither examined the full 50-year period for which statistics are available. The timescale of the study reported on here, however, is sufficient to demonstrate that the decline of MLs in Scotland is not short-term. Two ‘rise and fall’ cycles have culminated in sustained decline for almost twenty years (see Figures 1 and 2). This chapter examines how, and how effectively, governance systems and actors have interacted with these trends, providing new insights into why national, local authority and school ML policies and

initiatives often fail to improve pupil motivation, ML course enrolment or results (attainment) in ML examinations.

Methodology

A Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach was used, offering a means of dealing with the need to use both predetermined and emerging methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003:17).

The study triangulates:

- (i) documentary evidence, including national, local authority and school documents relating to MLs;
- (ii) qualifications statistics: Scottish Examination Board (SEB)/Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) data on language course availability, course enrolment and attainment in the period from 1965 to 2014;
- (iii) governance actors' testimonies: 80 completed questionnaires from governance agents at national, authority and school governance levels and forty follow-up interviews. Respondents retain anonymity (using a 5-digit code, M00XX) but are classified by occupation.

Modern Languages – A Subject Area in Long-Term Decline

Universal secondary education began in Scotland after 1945 (Paterson, 2003, p.14). Before this, MLs were a minority subject area. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the growth of secondary education, the arrival of more widely accessible Ordinary Grade qualifications in 1962, population growth, parental aspirations for qualifications and the decline of Classics combined to increase demand for ML qualifications and for the “advanced” ML Higher course. By the mid 1960s, government statistics (Paterson, 2003: 133; SEB, 1965, 1966, 1967) confirmed that MLs had grown significantly in curricular status and in the percentage of overall examination entries attracted. By 1965, MLs appeared a settled part of the Scottish core curriculum - alongside English, Mathematics, Science and Social Subjects – at least for able pupils.

Figures 1 and 2 draw upon national enrolment and attainment statistics for Scotland (SEB, 1965-1999; SQA, 2000-2014), to illustrate the subsequent decline of ML qualifications. To remove the obscuring effects of changing pupil populations (which rose rapidly post-war, peaked in the 1970s and then declined equally rapidly) the tables calculate ML enrolment/attainment as a percentage of enrolment or attainment across all subjects at the same Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels. Effectively, the tables show the ‘market share’ of pupil enrolment and examination passes (attainment) compared with all other subjects taken by 15/16-year-olds at SCQF Levels 3-5 (successively O Grades, then S Grades, then ‘old’ and ‘new’ National Qualifications), also Level 6 Highers, taken at age 16/17, and Level 7 (originally Certificate of Sixth Year Studies, then Advanced Higher) at age 17/18.

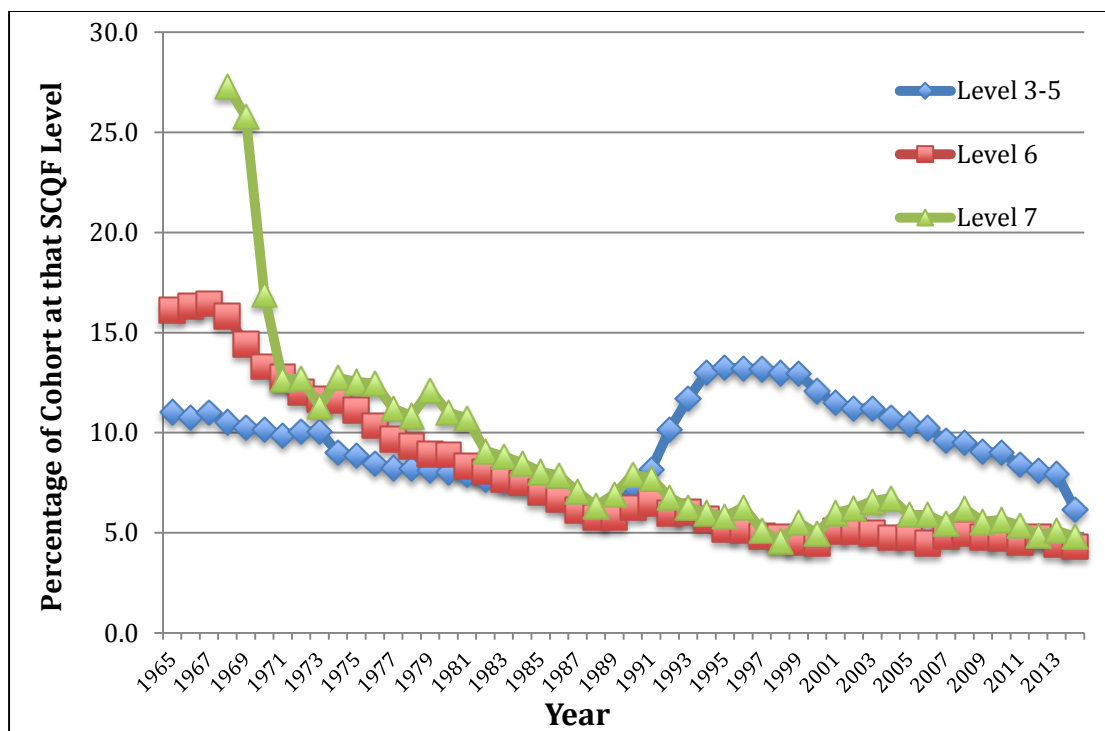


Figure 1: ML Enrolments (1965-2014) at SCQF Levels 3-5, 6 and 7 as Percentages of Uptake in All Subjects at Those Levels

Figure 1 demonstrates five phases of ML course enrolment: (i) steady decline from the mid-60s to the mid-80s (due to comprehensivisation, school leaving age increase to 16, poor materials and pedagogy and proliferation of alternative curricular courses, etc.), (ii) differing rates of growth at Levels 3-7 in the late 80s to early 90s (due to a political requirement for MLs to be compulsory to age 16), (iii) a stable period in the mid/late 90s, (iv) decline from around 2000 (relaxation of the “MLs to 16” policy; increased headteacher curricular control) and (v) an increased decline with the advent of the new Scottish *Curriculum for Excellence* curriculum in 2013 (continuing in 2015 and 2016, but beyond the scope of this chapter).

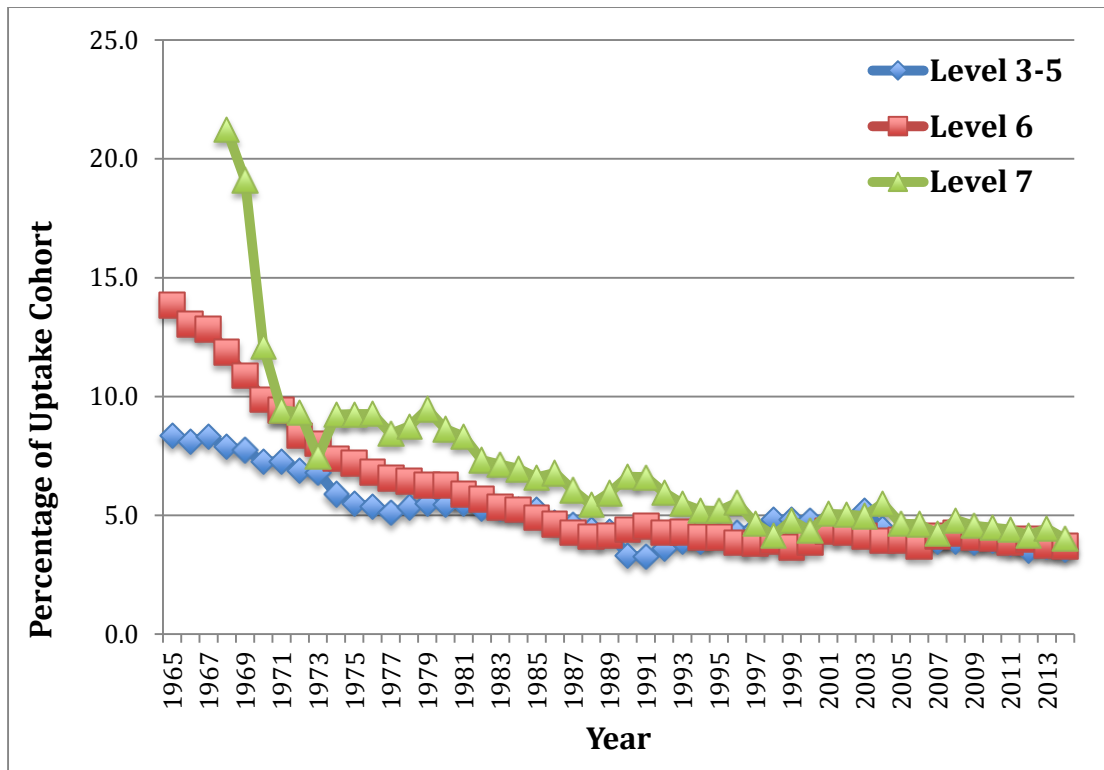


Figure 2: ML Attainment (1965 – 2014) at SCQF Levels 5, 6 and 7 as Percentages of Attainment in All Subjects at SCQF Levels 3-5, 6 and 7

Figure 2 concentrates on pupils passing the Level 5 examination (the most able Fourth Year pupils: those most likely to proceed to Level 6), along with those passing Levels 6 and 7. The Level 5-7 attainment pattern is one of long-term decline with only a very limited recovery in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The causes of these patterns are explored in subsequent sections of this chapter but it is necessary first to understand how MLs have been organised and controlled in Scotland and to note the key periods of change. These will then be examined against periods of ML growth or decline.

Governance of Modern Languages

Overview

The Scottish curriculum (including MLs) and qualifications are controlled by a three-layer hierarchical governance system, comprising national, local authority and school layers. Each layer possesses considerable internal structure including sub-hierarchies or, occasionally, networks (organic social systems, not the bureaucratic systems of hierarchy). For much of the period studied, the national layer has comprised a controlling “First Triumvirate” of Scottish Ministers, civil servants and HMI, with a “Second Triumvirate” of national agencies controlling curriculum, qualifications and teachers. The local authority layer contains local politicians, education officers and some central personnel. Headteachers interviewed saw themselves as a quasi-separate layer resident in both school and local authority levels, with the complexities inherent

in such a situation. Other teaches lie wholly within the school layer, with the system completed by an outer “cloud” of relatively disenfranchised “governance actors”: pupils, parents, unions, business and tertiary education.

This Scottish system contrasts sharply with England and Wales where, for example, Ball (e.g. Ball, 2009; Ball & Junemann, 2012) identifies multiple forms of school, multiple providers of qualifications and the networked involvement of more “actors” in the processes of governing education. Set against such complexity, Scottish education appears remarkably undifferentiated. Fewer than 5% of learners study in fee-paying schools (Paterson, 2003, p.14), with 95% in state-controlled comprehensive schools, strategically directed by government but managed by local authorities. Evidence gathered for this study, both documentary and from respondents, suggests that issues generated by hierarchy, inter-layer contention and moderation of policy by lower layers have made major contributions to the ML patterns seen in Figures 1 and 2.

Governance and Structure

The Scottish governance system has experienced major change and shifting asymmetries of power since 1962. Five governance structures are identifiable across the period, from (i) the original hierarchical and highly centralist post-war structure to (iii) the more pluralistic system required by expansion in the 1950s to 1970s and the Thatcherite “market economy” initiatives of the 1980s and back to (v) an increasingly centralist post-devolution hierarchy, particularly since the advent of a majority Scottish National Party (SNP) government. Structures (ii) and (iv) are transitional models.

Changes arose through expediency (driven by factors such as post-war expansion), political dogma (e.g. the Thatcher/Forsyth changes or SNP centralisation) and tensions between Scottish and local governments (Bloomer, 2013).

The first structure – in place in 1962 - was a relatively uncluttered hierarchical system of three nested governance layers: national, local authority and school. Some other structures existed, e.g. teacher unions (EIS and SSTA), headteacher associations and the local authority Education Directors’ body. A few national proto-agencies also existed: notably, the (repeatedly suspended) Advisory Council on Education in Scotland (ACES). At this time, ministers adopted a largely “hands-off” approach to the curriculum (McPherson & Raab, 1988), leaving civil servants (SED) and HMI, neither of whom evinced a vision for MLs during this period, to achieve a balance of vision, purpose and direction. The only other significant voice, ACES, was not a supporter of MLs (SED, 1947).

The second (1970s) structure introduced a Second Triumvirate of national agencies, specifically to manage growth in areas previously directed by HMI. The First Triumvirate - unwilling to cede control but unable to absorb the increased qualifications, teacher and curricular workload (McPherson & Raab, 1988: 288, 293, 323) - *had* to establish the Scottish Examination Board (SEB), the General Teaching Council (GTC and, later, GTC Scotland) and the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC and, later, Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and then part of Education Scotland), possibly explaining the later difficulties experienced by all three.

The agencies' constitutions permitted the First Triumvirate to control – sometimes directly - their workings and decisions, although an increasingly pressurised HMI (*ibid.*: 263-4) struggled to achieve this. Two of the three agencies remain, possibly reflecting a continuing workload beyond the capacity of the First Triumvirate in these areas. However, the third - the curricular agency – has experienced recurring difficulties, undergoing multiple reviews and eventual replacement of ACES, SCCC and LTS in turn. Documentary analysis indicates that none of these three agencies were, however, significant advocates of ML learning.

Alongside these national changes, local government was transformed in 1975 by the replacement of 35 County/City Councils by 12 Regional Councils. The largest, Strathclyde, became the largest education authority in Europe and some larger regions developed significantly enhanced structures and expertise in governing education, including provision of specialist officers to lead/develop MLs. Their existence, however, represented an increasing political challenge to the UK government.

The third structure incorporated these changes and the subsequent changes introduced by the neoliberal Thatcher administration and its Scottish Minister for Education, Michael Forsyth. Their attempted introduction of marketization of education into a hostile Scottish society fuelled a long-term Scottish Conservative collapse. However, the political outcomes - for Scotland and the UK - obscure both Forsyth's long-term effects on educational governance and his largely beneficial impact on MLs. This third structure introduced greater political control by Scottish Ministers, including a requirement for pupils to study an ML for at least 4 years, to age 16 (whose impact may be seen from 1989 onwards in Figure 1, although less so in Figure 2), a moderation of the civil service / HMI balance in favour of civil servants and an attempt to include previously isolated actors (particularly parents and business) in meaningful educational governance.

The fourth structure (1996 to 2007) introduced radical changes due to the Conservatives' second re-reorganisation of local government (to remove the increasingly troublesome Regions) in 1996 and also the impact of devolved Scottish government from 1999. Although not well understood at the time, these two major changes, along with the Conservative demise in Scotland, transient Blairism, seven education ministers in as many years from 1995 and a rapid turnover of First Ministers in the early years of the new Scottish Executive generated significant politico-educational instability. The combined impact of national political turmoil and significant weakening of local authorities had profound effects for Scottish education, but particularly so for MLs, through the weakening of local authorities' ability to support specific subjects, coupled with the rapidly changing national agendas of the seven education ministers and the rapid replacement, abandonment and mutual interference of major educational initiatives. As discussed later, the unintended consequences of the many strategic decisions taken, changed and changed again in this period included allowing headteachers significant leeway to remove MLs from much of the secondary curriculum, failing to consolidate ML teaching in primary schools and the effective abandonment of the one major ML initiative intended to restore MLs to an appropriate place in the curriculum.

The fifth structure added what almost all respondents (except a few national and local authority respondents) describe as increasingly centralist control by the majority SNP

government elected in 2011, although some nationally active respondents suggested this began around 2008. This is evident in increased ministerial/civil service control of education, the disappearance (again) of the curricular agency and the amalgamation of its remnants in a new body, Education Scotland, along with a smaller, apparently weakened (according to a majority of respondents) HMI.

Governance and Control

Despite these structural changes, the First Triumvirate has maintained control, albeit imperfectly. A large majority of respondents support this view, as typified by M0016 (local government leader) who describes “a set of 3 linked hierarchies - national, local authority and school - which suffer from relatively poor linkages”. Some limited growth of networks, possibly leading to increased contention within the system, is evident but Scottish educational governance continues to happen “in the shadow of hierarchy” (Scharpf, 1997). Inter/intra-layer linkages were perceived by almost all respondents to be subject to contention and variably effective. M0050 (headteacher) provided a representative view: “the structure is disconnected, with aspects of hierarchy and networks”.

The local authority level was initially strengthened, particularly in larger authorities, after “regionalisation” in 1975 but virtually all respondents agree that this strength was significantly compromised in most local authorities by the move to smaller “unitary” councils in 1996. Councils’ abilities to support/challenge their schools were further weakened by the financial crisis and the SNP-COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) Concordat, causing staffing reductions and an associated loss of expertise and capacity (including almost all central ML officers). Headteachers, however, have gained increased freedom of financial and curricular operation as a result of the Forsyth initiatives, removal of national curricular guidelines in 2000 and the weakening of council capacity. This allows them much greater control of the existence (or otherwise) of ML courses in their schools than before 2000, as seen in Figures 1 and 2.

The overall result of these changes to educational governance is perceived by a large majority of respondents to have lessened Scotland’s capacity to effectively govern, or improve, MLs (and the wider curriculum).

Governance and agency

The stated view of successive Scottish government bodies is that the layers of Scottish governance operate in harmony, for example: “public sector education in Scotland is a partnership between central and local government” (Scottish Information Office, 1977: 2). Challenges to this view come from Scottish academics, particularly Humes (1986) who suggested that the two Triumvirates operate an “incestuous, self-regarding arrangement” (pp.116-7). Other academics have seen the arrangement more positively with McPherson and Raab describing a “policy community” but rejecting partnership (1988: 3-4) and Arnott and Ozga (2009) having a more positive view. Most respondents see the system as elitist, for example: “The national tier is by far the most important [and] works through the consensus of elites” (M0016).

The commonest view of respondents, that “agency always trumps structure” (M0021, national agency officer) does not appear, on the basis of the available evidence, to hold true of “elite” governance actors such as Ministers, national agency leaders, local authority chief executives or political leaders of councils. A few, with only Michael Forsyth consistently identified by respondents or academic authorities (e.g. Humes, 1995) have operated at moments when a combination of factors has allowed them to significantly change the direction of ML governance. Forsyth’s impact on the enrolment patterns of Figure 1 is clear, but unique. No other high-level governance actor has individually generated notable improvement or halted decline.

Respondents’ views *do* apply to middle/lower-ranking actors (especially headteachers and subject department leaders) who can (and have repeatedly been observed by respondents to) circumvent, subvert and/or re-interpret governance actions or policy emanating from higher hierarchical levels. This also applies to local authorities’ increasing inability to support or challenge ML teaching, leaving curricular policy to headteachers. Most respondents confirmed that post-1996 local authority decline and weakening inter/intra-level linkages are leaving lower-layer actors to make their own decisions on a wider range of matters, despite national centralisation of policy.

Effects of governance on modern languages

Impact through curricular vision and policy

Almost all respondents disputed the existence of a “Scottish vision” for MLs, due to lack of consistency, negativity, intermittent commitment to MLs and/or a failure to communicate any vision to others. Representative responses included:

There has not been a consistent vision for MLs. Originally, MLs were for an elite group. During the Forsyth period, there *was* a vision. Maybe it was a “you’ve been told” approach, but it *did* produce results.
(M0001, council senior officer)

Little longitudinal strategy is evident in the learning and teaching of Modern Languages.
(M0040, headteacher).

Almost all respondents perceive that this partially accounts for Figures 1 and 2.

This lack of vision derives from a 1907 Scottish Office memorandum stating that: “knowledge of a language other than the mother tongue is not a necessary part of the equipment of an educated mind” (SED, 1947: 86). Although the attitudes of 1907 must have seemed distant in 1947, the memorandum was explicitly endorsed by the seminal 1947 ACES Report (*ibid.*: 19-21, 86). The 1947 Report rejected MLs for most learners of greater, average or lesser ability alike, suggesting that: “the evidence is conclusive that very many children, perhaps even a majority, are incapable of progressing any distance ... or of extracting any substantial benefit from their study [of MLs]” (*ibid.*, p.20).

Although initially shelved by the Scottish Education Department (SED), the 1947 Report strongly influenced Scottish education from 1950 to the millennium (Paterson,

2003) and so its rejection of any significant curricular place for MLs beyond the second year of secondary education (S2) was significant. The situation worsened in ACES' 1959 report (SED, 1959) where MLs barely featured and were recommended to headteachers as optional throughout secondary education. Thus, throughout the 1950s to 1970s, MLs were officially merely an option for *some* 'elite' learners.

Nothing changed until the next major Scottish curriculum initiative, the Munn Report (SED, 1977), in which MLs became compulsory in S1-2 but remained optional thereafter. Only after Forsyth's Circular 1178 (SED, 1989) did MLs become a core subject for all pupils in S1-S4 (and a compulsory experience for older primary school pupils). However, Forsyth's initiatives did not proceed smoothly. HMI's highly critical ML reports (HMI, 1990, 1998) enumerate difficulties with the primary and S1-S2 phases. Union and media troubles also slowed implementation, causing the incoming Blair government to react by launching a "ministerial action group" (MAG) on MLs.

The rapid political and structural changes in Scottish and local government at this time began to manifest themselves. MAG was a significant departure as previous national educational working parties were jointly organised by HMI and the agencies, not imposed by politicians. Although MAG's report, *Citizens of a Multilingual World* (CoaMW) (MAG, 2000), was endorsed by the subsequent devolved coalition government, it was not implemented in secondary schools to any extent. Simultaneously, Circular 3/2001 (SED, 2001) - left in place after the Curriculum Flexibility (SED, 2002) initiative was abandoned for the overlapping Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) initiative (SED, 2004) – gave headteachers unprecedented curricular freedom of action and a specific message about: "not compelling" (SED, 2001: 3) learners to study MLs.

The current policy initiatives, CfE and the "1+2" primary ML initiative, have already clashed in their impact on MLs. This mirrors the "innovation overload" period of the 1990s-2000s when up to six curricular initiatives were in the process of simultaneous development/implementation, with clashes of effect (and sometimes intent), abandonments and unforeseen interactions. "1+2" seeks to ensure that all primary pupils are actively learning a native language and 2 foreign languages by Primary 5 (in broad alignment with EU policy). This has, however, been counteracted by CfE's further curricular freedoms for secondary headteachers. The curricular distortion generated jointly by this freedom and by a perceived (by some headteachers and local authorities) reduction of time to study for the Level 3-5 examinations, has seen ML attainment in S4 examinations in 2014 fall by 40% (of the 2013 level) in French, German and Chinese and 20% in most other MLs (Scott, 2015).

Impact through qualifications policy

The lack of a "Scottish vision" for MLs is also evident in qualifications. Scottish qualifications policy lay with HMI until 1962, with SEB until 1999 and SQA since 2000, although policy is subject to consultation with politicians, civil servants and others. Qualifications in seven MLs were available in 1962: these, and subsequent changes, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Provision of ML Qualifications (1965 – 2013)

	Language	From	Until	Peak S3-4 Uptake	Duration of availability (years)	Peak Enrolment Year(s)
Phase						
Phase 1	French	Pre-1965	2015 ♦	42,626	50+	81, <u>96</u> , 03
	German	Pre-1965	2015 ♦	17,157	50+	1982, <u>1997</u>
	Italian	Pre-1965	2015 ♦	1,108	50+	1983, <u>2001</u>
	Portuguese	Pre-1965	1993	11	40+	1974
	Russian	Pre-1965	2014	384	50+	1970
	Spanish	Pre-1965	2015 ♦	6573	50+	1982, <u>2011</u>
	Gaelic (Learners)	Pre-1965	2015 ♦	540	50+	85, <u>96</u> , 08
Phase 2	Norwegian	1968	1993	41	26	1987
	Swedish	1968	1993	15	26	1968
	Danish	1976	1979	1	4	1976, 1979
Phase 3	Dutch	1974	1979	4	6	1979
	Hungarian	1974	1979	3	6	1975
	Persian	1976	1979	2	4	1978
	Polish	1976	1979	3	4	1976
	Afrikaans	1978	1979	2	2	1979
	Swahili	1978	1979	1	2	1978
Phase 4	Hebrew (Modern)	1981	1993	25	13	1991, 1992
Phase 5	Urdu	1998	2015 ♦	181	18+	2003
	ESOL	2007	2015 ♦	1075	9+	2014
	Chinese	1978	1979	4	2	1979
	Languages	2009	2015 ♦	245	7+	2013

N.B. Languages shaded have been withdrawn.

Twenty foreign languages have been offered to learners during the period considered. Of these, only eight remained in 2014. This provides a range of languages but should be considered against the peak uptake for each language - and in the knowledge that current enrolment levels are *well* below the peak in all languages except Spanish and English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL). Additionally, half of the eight MLs (Chinese, Gaelic (Learners), Italian and Urdu) are available on a limited basis and this is more pronounced in S5-6 courses.

Questioning of respondents and documentary analysis were employed in attempting to ascertain the rationales and policy changes behind this fluctuating provision. Phase

1 represents the languages available in the immediate post-war period. Respondents with long experience of MLs (e.g. M0001, M0002, M0004, M0007 (all ML officers), M0022, M0029 (local authority leaders), M0051 (headteacher)) all spoke of a subsequent period of language diversification in the 1960s and 1970s. This is evidenced by the nine MLs begun (and mostly terminated) during this time. No policy document or official circular could be located to substantiate a “diversification policy” or explain the subsequent removal of most of the subjects concerned. Respondents suggested that low enrolment meant that most new languages were removed by SEB to minimise costs. When asked, SQA (the current examination body) indicated they retain no records of SEB’s actions but confirmed that current qualifications must be financially self-sustaining, except specifically funded governmental priorities (currently, Chinese, Gaelic and Urdu).

Further deletions came in 1993 with Circular 1178 (SED, 1989). The circular indicates Michael Forsyth was committed to MLs, primarily to support Britain’s role in the forthcoming European Union, concentrating schools’ efforts on EU languages - French, German, Italian and Spanish - along with the strategically important Russian and ‘where there is a demand for it’ (p.3) Gaelic, Classics and Asian languages.

It is difficult to reconcile subsequent changes: in recognition of growing ethnic diversity, Urdu and ESOL have been added, but Polish and Hebrew removed; also the economically significant Chinese was restarted but the economically important Portuguese and Russian were removed. Before Phase 5, respondents suggested various economic, political and ethnic rationales for addition/removal of languages but had no evidence for specific changes.

It is also difficult to identify a rationale for specific languages through analysing Scottish educational policy: no SEB/SQA document was available to illustrate or explain provision. The original ACES report (SED, 1947) argues *against* French on educational grounds, but - to a limited extent - *for* Spanish and Italian. The Munn Report (SED, 1977), almost uniquely among Scottish educational policy documents, addresses educational theory, attempting to base its recommendations upon this, but does not include MLs in its compulsory subjects for S3 and S4. Forsyth’s Circular 1178 (SED, 1989) is thus the clearest statement of a need for certain languages as a “valid educational experience” (p.1).

Impact through curricular initiatives

As seen in relation to vision, policy and curricular agencies, Scottish curricular governance has been generally weak. This trait may also be observed in the governance of major educational initiatives. Ten post-war ‘waves’ of attempted curricular and/or qualifications improvements were developed (and *usually* implemented) in attempts to improve either the whole curriculum, individual age-related stages of the curriculum or specifically MLs.

The initial (1950s-60s) wave of initiatives to meet parental aspirations by improving the curriculum and introducing subject qualifications, at least for the more able, was generally effective. The second (1960s), however, was an ill-prepared attempt to introduce primary school MLs which, like its English equivalent (see Daniels, this volume), failed badly. Unfortunately, this was paralleled by the introduction of

secondary “drill and practice” materials just as this approach was becoming discredited across Europe.

The third (1960s-70s) wave, a cross-party political move towards “democratisation” of education, led to the Raising of the School Leaving Age (ROSLA) to 16 and to comprehensive schools but was undermined by incoherent planning and development (Paterson, 2003: 138) and a failure to provide accommodation, resources or training fit for radically changed school populations (Woodin, McCulloch & Cowan, 2012) – with inevitable consequences for attendance, behaviour, motivation and attainment (Paterson, 2003), not least in MLs (FLUSS). Scottish universities’ simultaneous removal of ML Highers as entrance qualifications for many courses and the continuing diversification of Ordinary Grade courses further increased the drift from ML courses.

In the 1970s, a fourth wave attempted to replace “drill and practice” with “spoken, relevant language”, resulting in improvements with average/less able learners but difficulties for the more able (FLUSS; HMI, 1998). This approach persuaded the designers of Standard Grade ML qualifications to abandon key components, particularly Writing, causing a further decline in attainment. On reaching office, Michael Forsyth had immediately abandoned middle school initiatives for a new 5-14 curriculum (and tests) for primary and S1-2 learners and introduced the Munn curriculum and related Standard Grade qualifications for all S3-S4 learners, along with a revived Modern Languages in Primary Schools (MLPS) initiative. Issues abounded: the primary/lower secondary 5-14 ML programme had no guidelines for primary ML courses; primary ML training experienced significant problems and the lack of a compulsory Standard Grade Writing component impacted on Higher MLs. Union action against the unprecedented development workload seriously compounded these difficulties.

In a sixth wave, the Howie Report (SOED, 1992) on S5-S6 courses and qualifications was also abandoned and immediately replaced by the Higher Still S5-6 initiative and related National Qualifications (NQs) which were designed for S5-S6 *and* college learners but also found their way into S3/4 course structures, resulting in two parallel qualifications systems (S Grade and “old” NQs).

The unfavourable HMI ML reports (1990,1998), the latter of which heavily criticised teachers, headteachers, directors of education and national leaders, generated the ML-specific seventh wave, Citizens of a Multilingual World (CoaMW), which joined the four Forsyth initiatives. When this was joined by an eighth wave - the secondary Curriculum Flexibility programme with increased curricular control for headteachers - it is possibly unsurprising that MLs, undergoing curricular change from mid-primary to S6, lacking full guidelines, experiencing difficulties at the primary-secondary interface and neither consistently well taught nor resourced, were seen by many headteachers as a tempting target for reduction or deletion.

In a ninth development wave, the multiple major initiatives of waves 5 to 8 were overtaken by a complete change of P1-S5 curriculum *and* the S4 qualifications through the appearance of the Curriculum for Excellence initiative and ‘new’ National Qualifications in 2010. This was again met with considerable concern by teaching unions (a concern substantiated by almost all respondents) but without the industrial

action characteristic of the 1990s. The effects for MLs, however, have been more severe than in the 1990s. CfE formalised what had begun with Curricular Flexibility and so MLs became compulsory in S1-3 only, although some schools have reduced this further. Respondents mostly see the subsequent “1+2” ML initiative as having potential if it can/will be implemented by councils and their schools at a time of financial and staffing shortage but see the continued indifference/aversion to MLs on the part of some council officers and many (particularly secondary) headteachers as a major challenge for MLs.

In summary, MLs have not been well supported, either through the implementation of major curricular initiatives or by the quality of governance applied to these. Of the twenty-one initiatives within the ten waves, commentators or respondents have identified only four as clearly benefitting MLs (and two of these date to before 1962). Seven initiatives have been seen to cause direct harm to ML enrolment and attainment and the remaining ten have variously caused benefit and harm or to have simply been abandoned. In the light of this evidence, it appears inevitable that the operation of ML governance itself should be considered.

The operation of governance

The extent of cyclical improvements






Local authority and school leaders in Scotland have been enjoined by governments and HMI (e.g. HMIe, 2007b, 2007c) to improve teaching, learning and attainment through adopting a cyclical approach to governance, drawing heavily on the corporate PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) Cycle developed by Dr W. Edwards Deming. Given the overlaps, abandonments and changes of direction embedded in the ten waves of ML/whole curricular initiatives considered earlier, compounded by significant political actions and changes in the 1970s, 1980s and again from the mid-1990s to date, it was important to establish whether any cyclical improvement approach had been considered or employed in ML developments, particularly to learn from prior successes or failures.

Early respondents suggested the PDCA cycle did not fully describe the complex processes of educational governance. Their views influenced the development of a more nuanced 12-point cycle later used with all respondents in assessing the actions and impact of national, council and school governance actors and groups. The left-hand column of Table 2 shows the twelve stages. The remaining columns show respondents’ evaluation of the quality of their own and others’ governance of MLs.

Table 2: Effectiveness of ML Governance: Self and Mutual Perceptions

Perceptions of Extent of Impact	National Actors' View of			Local Auth. Actors' View of			School Actors' View of		
	Nat	LA	Sch	Nat	LA	Sch	Nat	LA	Sch
Leadership	2.1	2.0	2.8	1.6	2.1	2.4	1.4	1.4	2.9
Research	1.1	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.8	1.4
Planning	1.9	1.7	2.0	1.5	2.1	2.3	1.5	1.0	2.7
Consultation	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.1	0.9	2.4
Policy	2.8	1.8	2.1	2.2	1.3	1.8	2.0	1.4	2.5
Development	2.1	1.8	2.4	1.6	1.6	2.1	1.4	1.5	2.8
Training	1.3	2.1	2.3	1.4	1.9	2.0	1.2	1.5	2.5
Resourcing	2.1	2.0	2.5	1.5	2.1	2.3	1.2	1.6	2.8
Management	1.9	1.9	2.7	0.8	1.7	2.1	1.0	1.2	2.8
Implementation	1.9	1.9	2.4	1.1	1.6	2.1	1.1	1.2	2.8
Evaluation	1.7	1.4	2.0	1.1	1.4	1.6	1.0	0.8	2.4
Amendment	1.3	1.1	1.6	0.9	1.4	1.5	1.0	0.8	2.4

KEY:

0 = No action/impact.	(0.00 – 0.99: )
1 = Little action/impact.	(1.00 – 1.99: )
2 = Medium action/impact.	(2.00 – 2.99: )
3 = Major action/impact.	(3.00 – 3.99: )
4 = Extensive action/impact.	(4.00: )

The eighty respondents were divided into three groups – national, local authority and school – of roughly similar size. National respondents see themselves as having weak to strong (in policy only) impact; local authority actors claim little impact. School respondents see themselves as having far greater impact on all aspects of ML governance except research. All groups perceive that school-based governance is stronger than the others. Schools and councils see national actors as having little impact and taking less than a medium extent of action. National and (particularly) school actors both perceive significant failures of impact in local authorities.

This common view that school-based governance - by headteachers and others - predominates inevitably raises questions about governments' and authorities' ability to implement ML initiatives that may not be supported by schools. This appears to be supported by the decline in ML course enrolment evident in Figure 1 after 2000 when headteachers gained far greater control of the curriculum.

Concluding remarks

The evidence considered in this chapter suggests improvements in MLs have been hampered by a lack of consistent (or shared) vision for, and appropriate action on, the role of ML learning and qualifications in Scottish society and the curriculum for over 50 years. Where a vision *has* existed, it has almost always portrayed MLs as undesirable, peripheral or optional for all or part of many/most learners' primary and secondary experiences.

Scottish politico-educational governance of ML at all levels has been characterised by inconsistency, has suffered repeated discontinuities and has not consistently embodied the ‘partnership’ stressed by successive Scottish Ministers. Repeated instances of abandonment of major developments, the unintended negative impacts of initiatives and the collateral damage caused by conflicting initiatives have not assisted progress.

Despite possessing a well-respected evaluative arm, HMI(e), the governance system has at times failed to act on its findings. No documentary or respondent-based evidence was found of consistent use of the PDCA cycle or the cyclical process of visualising, planning, implementing, evaluating and amending initiatives does not appear to operate effectively at national or, in most cases, local authority levels.

The governance system’s capacity to improve MLs has been limited by several issues. National political leadership of MLs faltered under multiple change pressures from the mid 1990s to the early 2000s. Significant governance discontinuities arose from 9 Ministers in 10 years (7 in 7), multiple simultaneous ML/whole-curriculum initiatives and three *very* different Scottish governments in 3 years. A majority of respondents dealing directly with government expressed concern about increased political centralisation under the SNP since 2007, the enhanced control of civil servants and the perceived decline of HMI. Local government changes since 1996 have seriously impaired the vision, expertise and capacity of local authority teams. According to respondents, this has impacted negatively on primary and secondary MLs alike.

Governance issues have occurred across and within all governance layers as teachers, headteachers, councils, agencies and governments have attempted to improve MLs but, in so doing, have generated many of the issues inhibiting improvement. Expansion of headteacher control, especially since 2000, has also impacted negatively, as many headteacher respondents perceive MLs as “difficult” (M0038), question the quality of their ML leaders and/or teachers and/or abandon MLs for subjects “more likely to improve attainment” (M0035).

In what remains a layered hierarchical governance system, the long-term lack of focus on ensuring effective linkages between (and, at times, within) layers has also caused significant issues. Despite political insistence on ‘partnership’, the system is operated by the ‘consensus of elites’ (M0016) visible from documentary evidence and respondents’ insights. Most individual respondents, however, admitted some responsibility for the ML decline. “I blame myself, because...” was a common phrase: a majority of governance actors interviewed feel they should have seen the problem sooner / acted differently / persuaded others to “do something”. However, the next commonest response (from a sizeable minority) was to blame someone else for the failures.

Commonality of purpose, consistency of vision, effectiveness of implementation or consistent use of evaluation and research have not consistently characterised Scottish attempts to improve MLs. This research may provide a new focus for improvements across these areas.

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